1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

human wearer belongs to a sphere differing from that of supernatural animals and is dangerous to them. Consequently, if worn clothing be thrown on a fire it repels unpleasant visitors. Other powerful protections are false hellebore, and smoked salmon roe. A wise hunter always carries these and if he sees a dangerous creature such as a *smnq*, he chews the two together and spits them towards the peril. Needless to say, if a kindly animal is seen, the hunter does not drive it away by these methods. Why false hellebore should be so effective is a matter of wonder to the Bella Coola themselves, for as a rule it is the human essence attached to objects which gives them their strength over the supernatural. Thus the most powerful of all charms are pads that have been used by women during their menses. If a woman travels on the ocean she is careful to carry some of them with her ready to repel any danger from the supernatural water beings."[1]

The manner in which the Bella Coola regard mythical animals and other evidences of the supernatural is illustrated by the following practice. Hunters always want to know the direction of the wind, and when the breeze is too slight to be discernible they blow upwards a small amount of eagle down, which is so light that the faintest breath of air will bear it down wind. What the logical white man considers a natural phenomenon, appears to the Bella Coola as miraculous; eagle down, stripped from the dead bird by human hands and stored for some time within a house, has become so humanized that it can conquer supernatural powers to indicate the direction of the wind.

The mythical monsters already described are not the only animals regarded as supernatural by the Bella Coola. They believe that in the beginning *Alquntăm* created men and beasts at the same time and in the same place, giving the former the greater share of power, but not exiling the latter to a different plane of existence. In those early days, the semi-supernatural

[1] This matter will be described more fully in connection with Magic; see vol. I, chap. xx.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

concerning the danger of near approach to this creature:

Kwilais was a man of mixed lineage, Kimsquit and *Pas*, near Nowitte. With several companions he was gathering berries when he stepped into a hole and felt numerous tiny creatures crawling over his legs. Looking down, he saw that they were small snakes, that had just been hatched from a Mother of Snakes. He fled, terrified, pursued by the reptiles, which he managed to keep off to some extent by brushing behind him a branch of spiny swamp gooseberry, a known deterrent. When he had out-distanced the snakes he called his companions, told them of his adventure, and returned home. There he repeated the tale. Though *Kwilais* did not know it, many of the snakes had succeeded in entering his stomach. Presently he began to swell; his body became larger and larger until he was in danger of bursting. The reptiles within were breeding rapidly. Luckily, one of his fellow villagers knew the proper remedy. A raised bed was made for the sufferer about five feet from the ground where *Kwilais* stretched himself on a number of thorny branches, while his friends built a fire of devil's club and swamp gooseberry twigs so that he was fumigated in the smoke. Then, to give greater potency, they cast on the flames soiled clothing and pounded cedar-bark pads stained with menstrual blood; even this was of no avail, so finally a woman squeezed out into a vessel some of her menstrual blood which *Kwilais* drank. This killed the snakes. The patient began to vomit, emitting a mass of wriggling serpents, and at once began to grow thinner, soon regaining his normal condition. Had he not been able to eject the reptiles, he would have died.

Kwilais was not the only one to have this unpleasant experience. Many others have suffered in the same way, but in no case has anyone been able to feel the snakes at the actual place or time of entry.

The beliefs of the Bella Coola concerning the power possessed by animals are clearly shown by their attitude with regard to killing them. Man is immortal, so are animals. *Alquntám* decreed that beasts and birds should serve as food for mankind, but it is only their clothing, their worthless "blanket of flesh," as the Bella Coola express it, which they give to hunters. In the autumn leaves appear to die, but every spring they are reborn. Similarly, when an animal is slain, it merely discards its visible self while its spirit[a] ascends

[a] Footnote, see vol. I, p. 98.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

There now remains only the necessity of removing from the house itself the supernatural power with which it is firmly believed to have been impregnated throughout the many weeks of the ceremony. Should this not be done, it would be so strong that only *nusuk* could thenceforth live in it, and no *kusiut* rite could be performed therein. One of the senior chiefs, acting on X's behalf, requests as many *sîki* as are present to go to the back-room. At the same time a drum is beaten slowly. The *sîki* call out loudly, in unison, *hoip* four times. The whistles sound from the back-room with ever-lessening intensity, as if the supernatural being, whose voice they are, were going away. It is said that this practice has been comparatively recently adopted from Rivers Inlet: there used to be nothing of the kind. The *sîki* re-emerge, and one of them stands behind the fire with his stick which he beats on the floor and calls on the audience to shout with him, "*hî* . . ." This is done four times.* It serves to purify the house from the supernatural power with which it has been saturated. The people then disperse, without food.

Goods from the general store are reserved to pay these men for their services, and also for cleansing the initiates from the powers with which they have been imbued, a rite that takes place the following morning in the presence of several *sîki* alone. The initiates are brought from the back-room and seated in a close circle between the door and the fire." A foreign *sîki* is chosen by X to perform the actual cleansing rite. He has been asked beforehand and has come provided with a long pole and some soiled clothing. It is immaterial whose this is, provided that it has been in contact with a human body; the most potent articles are catamenial cedar-bark pads.

The *sîki* covers the young men with a large cedar-bark mat. Then he fastens the clothing or pads to his pole and holds the end in the fire until they are smouldering. Then he swings it four times over the heads of the initiates and throws the stick

*Behind the fire according to some informants.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

a man, *ut-unaits*, with the prerogative of enforcing obedience to river taboos. Ever since, the owner of this name, when it has been duly legalized, has had the right to perform this function. In some cases, such as carpenters and singers, the validation of a prerogative has not brought with it the necessary ability, so that the incumbent remains a properly ratified, but non-functioning, craftsman. No mechanical skill is required by a River Guardian, hence the owner of the name *ut-unaits* has always been able to perform his duties.

From time immemorial certain restrictions have been enforced concerning the river: No refuse may be thrown in, otherwise the olachen would remain in the ocean. For the same reason, women at certain periods are not allowed to bathe lest a speck of blood should blind the fish and prevent them from seeing the route. Occasionally an olachen with red eyes is caught; this is caused by some heedless woman. When the fish are running in the river, women are not allowed on the bank, nor to repair the nets. At high tide, it is forbidden to drive stakes for olachen nets.

The number of prohibitions increases during the critical period of the salmon run. Then no freshly hewn planks can be set afloat, and even a canoe which has just been completed must be kept for ten days before launching. No one whose husband or wife has died within the last year can embark at the village, but must proceed to a landing-place at the head of the fiord. Most important of all, refuse of salmon must be deposited in the woods; if thrown into the river, the fish would smell it and avoid the stream. Even accidents such as the upsetting of a canoe, or the spilling of olachen grease, are considered to be offences.

Disregard of any of these injunctions is displeasing to the salmon kind it is the duty of the River Guardian to punish the offender, irrespective of his rank. In case of slight infringements, he beats the guilty person or throws him into the river. The guilty person usually scrambles out, but should he be swept away and drowned, no recompense can be claimed by

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

881 [301] [439] [789] [538] bundle of four macaroni-shaped shells, probably *Dentalium*, which are said to have been imported from the north in early times. These marks serve to indicate the position of the girl, who is both feared and respected, possessed of supernatural power, and yet baneful. Many Bella Coola stories describe how adolescent girls have been able to vanquish supernatural beings; perhaps the most striking of these is the manner in which they once saved mankind when the sun came too close to the earth. At the end of a year, or eleven months according to one old woman, the seclusion is terminated, and the girl resumes her normal activities. The first time she goes to the river she must throw on the water four pieces of dyed, and four pieces of undyed cedar-bark. This is especially important if the salmon are running at the time, although no explanation of this ritual is given.

582 556 882 The resumption of her freedom indicates that a girl has reached marriageable age. Chiefs sometimes confine their daughters for even longer than a year, and usually delay their marriages for several years to demonstrate their importance; but this is not necessary, nor is it practised by other than wealthy individuals. It is not uncommon for a girl to wed before her year is out; in that case her restrictions automatically [554] lapse. Chiefs never allow such a curtailment for their daughters; to do so would diminish the prestige of the latter, and be detrimental to the status of their children when they marry and have families. Illicit intercourse with a secluded adolescent is considered not only illegal but disgusting as well. Between the period of confinement and marriage, intercourse is [881] prohibited and guarded against by the parents of a girl, but is not considered filthy and seems to have been fairly common in former times with the daughters of poor people and slaves. This sometimes took place before the first menstruation in spite of the disapproval with which this was regarded.

826 841 989 Although the menstrual blood which appears at the first discharge is considered more baneful than that emitted on later occasions, it is always regarded as uncanny or unclean. It is

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

the most *human* of all substances, and, therefore, a potent protection against supernatural beings. It is valuable as a defence against evil monsters, but it is equally deadly to shamans and other human beings with supernatural powers. In the distant past, Raven taught mankind that to sleep with a menstruating woman would so blind a man that he would be unsuccessful in hunting. The belief is that animals, knowing everything that takes place, avoid one who is so unclean. One old man mentioned that he had failed to obey this injunction and considered his loss of virility as a punishment, overlooking the fact that he was over seventy years of age.

The coming of adolescence in a boy is recognized by change in voice and the other usual indications. He is neither taboo nor unclean, and consequently does not have to undergo any restrictions on his actions. There is no ceremony to mark the entry of a youth into adult membership of the tribe; instead, this comes gradually and puberty is no more than an indication of increasing age and strength.

Marriage

Like most so-called "primitive" peoples, the Bella Coola regard the married state as the normal condition of man. Anyone unwilling to wed is considered unnatural. Since the number of the sexes is approximately equal, the only persons forced to live alone are elderly widows and widowers, and those crippled, either mentally or physically. Such individuals are looked upon as unfortunate; in fact, they have failed in one of the most fundamental of life's struggles. Man provides fish and game, builds houses and canoes, while woman collects berries, makes baskets, cooks, and performs the multitudinous small household tasks.

"Is it not to the benefit of each to marry?" say the Bella Coola.

Marriage is not a mere economic arrangement, nor is its sole function to regulate relations between the sexes. Its most important feature is that it governs the status of the child.

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

764 783 776 comes and sits on the coffin during every funeral, seeking further victims. Death has so contaminated a widow or widower that she or he will fall an easy prey unless ceremonially purified. No special acts are carried out between interment and the burning of goods four days later, but the following four days must be spent in a small shelter of branches behind the village, hidden from sight in the forest. Within this the man or woman lies on the ground with legs close together and bent [841] at the knees, in the same position as a girl during the four days after her first menstruation. A male friend accompanies a widower; a female, a widow. This companion keeps a fire burning and administers to the comfort of the patient, for such a bereaved person is considered to be. Every evening the two return home and leave again the following morning. On one of these days, the companion scours the woods east of the village to find four spruce saplings growing within sight of each other in an east to west direction. To this place he leads the survivor on the morning after the fourth day of concealment[11] in the shelter. He bends down the top of the western sapling and ties it into a loop with a rope composed of alternate strands of dyed and undyed cedar-bark. The widower, or widow, crawls through this opening to the east and then makes a circle, sunwise, around the sapling. Passing to the next one, the same procedure is repeated, and so in succession for the third and fourth, each being left tied into a loop. There are at least two variations in this rite: Instead of passing through four saplings, some individuals choose to crawl four times through a single one, with a sunwise circuit intervening in every case. If the survivor be a member of a family in which it is customary to use four saplings, and if the friend cannot find four in proper alignment, he cuts a number of spruce branches and sets them upright, butts in the ground, leaving a small hole between them. Four sets of these are arranged, as substitutes for four saplings, and the crawling through takes

[11] There is variation in the exact time for this rite. Some individuals practise it on the fifth day after death and omit the waiting in the shelter.

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

These become lilies (of the species known as *łälkänełp* or *walilikwätsälätsälăts*, "The most potent of the pond") from the roots of which a tonic can be brewed. They can be collected by anyone, and the places where they grow are well known, but certain rules must be followed. Before reaching the pond the gatherer must find four spruce saplings, cut from each a bough projecting eastward, and lay these two by two, beside the water, with a space between. After plucking the lily roots he must place them on the ground between the spruce branches and tie the whole into a bundle with strips of dyed and undyed cedar-bark. He must be careful to wind these wrappings clockwise. On arriving at the house where the tonic is to be prepared, the bundle must be thrown in through the smoke-vent, never carried through the door. After these precautions the medicine can be prepared with safety. The roots are cut into thin slices and boiled for four days; a sick person then drinks several cupsful of the brew, which is particularly good for the blood. This remedy is especially effective if the patient is observing ceremonial chastity. The person administering the potion sees to it that the one being treated conforms to certain regulations for forty days. He must not eat fresh meat, fresh salmon, or any food prepared by a widow or a catamenial woman; he must not approach too closely a girl who is secluded following puberty, and he must observe absolute continence, not even sleeping with his wife. Death follows the breaking of any of these taboos.

Although supernatural good fortune is most frequently obtained from either a *mätsqus* or a *sɔsiutł*, it can be derived from other supernatural beings. In such cases the acquisition is seldom dangerous. The following tale describes the *qokăn·i*.

Long before the coming of the white man, but very long after the first people came to this earth, a certain Kimsquit man, *Wikwanutł*, who was also called *O'mätł*, was snaring mountain goats on Mount *Tcopinätł* when he heard on the upper slopes a peculiar cry which he recognized; from descriptions given him by the old people, as the note of a *qokăn·i*.

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

and heard her utter the name that was to be his, as a shaman, *Nitsɯmdimut*. He began to shake his hands as if dancing, for he was too feeble to do more, and began to sing the song. His mother at once called in the singers who listened, learning it for future use. The man is firmly convinced that if his mother had not thus called in the singers so speedily he would, after four days, have received another vision, and with it real shamanistic power. As it is, he is a shaman, since he was cured when at the point of death by *T̈litcäplitän·a* and received a name and song from her, but he is unable himself to effect cures. As soon as the singers had departed, his mother at once began to make for him a collar formed of alternate bands of dyed, and undyed, cedar-bark. This is the distinctive decoration worn constantly by a shaman for a certain period after receiving his powers, and at all times when dancing. Within a few days all the inhabitants of the village were called in and the man's family distributed presents, thus validating his shamanistic name. Such presents are not returnable; "they have become nothing" for the designation. Thus accredited, a shaman is in a position to start curing, if his song has contained a reference to a basin, otherwise, as in the present case, he is merely a shaman in a social sense, not professionally. There is thought to be actually within the new shaman's body, some peculiar power which is too potent to allow him to mix with others. Accordingly he wears the distinctive collar, which serves as a warning to menstruating women and others who are unclean to remain at a distance, and he spends much of his time alone in the forest. This continues until the next *kusiut* dance season when the coming to him of a *yeix* (II, p. 6) frees him from restraint, since the one supernatural power drives out the other. If the shaman himself is unwilling to have a *yeix*, it is sufficient if one comes to a son, or other near relative.

A shaman who has been told by his supernatural visitor to use a basin instructs a carpenter to make one for him. The design depends either on the owner's wish, or on that of his benefactor if the latter has decreed specifically.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

them renders it more likely that they will grant his requests. Therefore, a shaman is usually called upon to perform the following rites: 756* 782

(1) Washing the mouth of a person who has died without voiding from his body the first salmon or olachen of the season (I, p. 436). [764]

(2) Asking assistance for the complicated rites of the potlatch (I, p. 192). [556]

(3) Request for assistance before starting on a journey, by puffing eagle down into the air (I, p. 106). [484]

(4) Request for aid by means of placing food on the water and blowing eagle down into the air at Mesatche Nose and Kwatna (I, p. 109).

In fact a supplication to any supernatural being can be made with greater prospect of success by a shaman than by any other person.

The Power of Shamans

As has been said, a shaman actually has power within himself, and this is so strong that it may be a source of danger to others. If a man should pass behind one so endowed when the latter is eating, his spirit would be drawn from his body into the shaman's mouth, which would close with a click, crushing the spirit and killing the man. This is quite involuntary on the part of the shaman. It happened more than once among the early inhabitants, and since that time people have been very careful not to pass behind an eating shaman; this taboo was still in force until about 1885. A shaman, too, is said to be able to recall a spirit which has left its body, and thus caused illness. It is believed by some that shamans can see the position of a person's tally post, and so judge the length of his life. These examples show the varying beliefs of different Bella Coola concerning the powers of shamans. 756* [761] [264] [178] [755]

But the force within the shaman is really more dangerous to its possessor than to others. As certain "unclean" objects are able to subdue supernatural beings, so do these same ob- 756* 783 841

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

jects have power over shamans. A shaman must never sleep beside his wife during her menses, must never eat food prepared by a menstruating woman, by one who has recently washed a new-born infant, by a girl during the period of seclusion following puberty, or by a widow or widower during the year that follows the death of his partner. If a shaman's nose bleeds when he is dancing it is because a menstruating woman is present in the house; he at once asks the offender to withdraw, after which the bleeding stops. Moreover, he must never cure a woman during her periods. A wise shaman practises ceremonial chastity frequently. In view of the lack of cleanliness ascribed to menstrual blood, it is perhaps surprising that a woman can become a shaman while still of child-bearing age. This is rare, and only occurs when a woman is the last survivor of a family. The Bella Coola themselves consider it to be peculiar, only explicable on the ground that anything is possible to the supernatural beings, even the disregarding of feminine "uncleanness." Usually, female shamans are past the age of child-bearing; if not, they observe absolute chastity.

Even inadvertent breaking of one of these rules causes death. This is not regarded as a punishment inflicted by *Tlitcäpliläna*; it is merely the inevitable consequence of the supernatural power within the shaman having come in contact with what is not clean. As a shaman is considered to be immune against all ordinary ailments, his death is always attributed to the breaking of a taboo. Frequently the death of a shaman is accompanied by some convulsion of nature. One female shaman, for example, told the people of her village to keep their children within doors, since a supernatural being was coming for her. Soon it became dark; there were four loud claps of thunder, at the fourth of which she fell dead.

The following was related as an instance of the danger to a shaman of coming in contact with an unclean woman.

The son of the first man to come to earth at *Nulleax* was, like his father, named *Dudusong*ʷ. One April he and his wife went upstream to *Xwastlo*, a place in the country of the Carriers where milk-weed is plen-

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

tiful, of which they planned to collect a supply. In the course of their journey *Dudusonɣʷ* saw a man who, when he drew near, turned into a piece of hanging moss. A little later he again saw a figure, but on approaching it became a tree. *Dudusonɣʷ* and his wife walked on and presently the former once more beheld a man; this time the apparition changed to a fir tree. It was evident to *Dudusonɣʷ* that a supernatural being had manifested itself to him, and he told his wife that they must return. On reaching home he related his experience and gave a shaman's dance.

From this experience he had received the power of curing. He could see disease when it was invisible to all others, and could summon it to himself, where it was harmless, thus restoring the patient to health. He made for himself a rattle, shaped like a bird; this had the ability of dancing of its own accord, and would catch people's hair in its opening and closing beak. The sick were brought to *Dudusonɣʷ* from all over the valley. One day he travelled by canoe down to *Sɯxɬ* where he found many of the villagers seriously ill. His arrival was quite fortuitous, for he was unaware of the epidemic that was raging. The inhabitants sought his help, so he landed and cured them. He entered the house of a woman who claimed to be ill, and took the sickness upon himself, but no sooner had he left than he fell down stricken. He demanded to be taken home in his canoe, but he only lived two days after his return. The woman had been in pain from her menses; it was this that he had taken upon himself and caused his death.

In consequence of the danger attached to the vocation, many people try to avoid becoming shamans, though if *Ɬlitcäplilän·a* should appear to a man when ill, he cannot escape the power. The usual method of prevention is for a man to hold intercourse with his wife from below, so that her flesh, impure through its liability to menses, can form a barrier to the coming of supernatural power. One who wishes to escape always sleeps on the left of his wife, whereas if he is seeking shaman's power he sleeps on the right. Another method of avoidance is to use the hole in the floor which serves as exit and entrance to the house of a girl secluded following adolescence.

Since the power of a shaman is obtained by a personal experience, and lacks both form and substance, it cannot be transmitted and disappears at the owner's death. As has been

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

phases of activity, leaving here only certain rules about diet and a number of prohibitions which hunters must observe.

FOOD TABOOS OBSERVED BY WOMEN

Women must not eat bear meat. To do so would derange the catamenia and cause profuse growth of hair.

Women of child-bearing age must not eat beaver. To do so would cause a difficult delivery.

A woman of child-bearing age must not eat toasted salmon until the sticks have been removed which held it in front of the fire. She will bear twins if this injunction is disregarded.

TABOOS OBSERVED BY HUNTERS

No hunter or fisherman may leave the village in the morning if he has been foolish enough to break the night's fast. It is customary to depart at dawn and take a small meal when nearing the hunting or fishing-ground.

No hunter may drink water in which dog salmon have been soaked. Animals dislike this liquid and avoid a man with it in his stomach.

When traps have been set, and a party of hunters is sitting around the camp-fire in the evening, no one must pass between it and one of his fellows. If this should be done, heedlessly, animals would disregard the bait that has been set out.

When mountain goat hunters are travelling, the most expert must lead the party. When he sits down, so must the others, and no one can change places with him. This is said to be a custom of the Carriers as well as of the Bella Coola.

When a hunter is cutting up a bear, he must be careful not to cut a vein which is said to run across the chest and down each fore-paw. To do so causes sickness.

When a hunter kills a bear, he must place either the skull or the whole head in a tree near the scene of the kill, otherwise he will become blind. In some families, the men remove only an eye, place it in a notched stick and set this under an over-

6:Boas E-5 (1886-ca. 1890)1892
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

751 Women wear tight anklets to prevent
the calves of their legs from slipping down.' During their monthly
841 periods women place soft cedar-bark in the vagina. The bark is afterwards
824 burnt in the woods. The smoke of this fire is believed to be poisonous.

177 It is evident that the culture of the Bilqula is very greatly influenced
551 by that of the Kwakiutl. The secret societies and the potlatch ceremonies
556 are almost a copy of those of the Hēiltsuk'. This influence has been so
575 deep that names of even deities and of the mythical ancestors of certain
776 gentes are purely Kwakiutl words, or have at least Kwakiutl endings. Thus
771 the name Aiumkl'likya (see p. 413) is purely Kwakiutl, meaning 'good all
over the world.' K'ōmk'omkl'likya is also a Kwakiutl word, meaning
'the rich one of the world.' The chief's name, Mā'lakyilatl (see p. 409)
belongs to the same class of Kwakiutl names. On the other hand, the
religious ideas of the Bilqula are very curiously developed, and apparently
but slightly influenced by their neighbours. The whole Masmasalā'niq
tradition is peculiar to them, but has been partly adopted by the Awiky'-
ē'noq, with whom the Bilqula have intermarried.

[pp. 425-449 not processed]